

Message Text

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61/10

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-05 IO-11 OMB-01 /073 W
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P R 110904Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5965

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TO TEXTS)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION ISSUES STATEMENT RE
ARREST OF PERSONS AGITATING OVERTHROW OF GOVERNMENT
AND INITIAL REACTIONS TO STH

REF: SEOUL 1800, DTG 101140Z MAR 76

1. FOLLOWING RELEASE OF PROSECUTOR'S STATEMENT CONCERNING
ARREST AND INVESTIGATION OF PERSONS AGITATING OVERTHROW
OF GOVERNMENT, BY USING INDEPENDENCE DAY RELIGIOUS
SERVICE (REFTEL) SPOKESMAN FOR MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND
INFORMATION ISSUED FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

BEGIN TEXT:

THE GOVERNMENT, TOGETHER WITH ALL CONSCIENTIOUS RELIGIOUS
DEVOTEES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, DEEPLY REGRETS THE INCIDENT
IN WHICH SOME PERSONS UNLAWFULLY AGITATED FOR OVERTHROW OF
THE GOVERNMENT, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A RELIGIOUS SERVICE
COMMEMORATING SAMIL INDEPENDENCE DAY ON MARCH 1.

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IN THE INCIDENT, ANTI-GOVERNMENT POLITICAL FORCES COMMITTED AN ILLEGAL ACT IN DEFIANCE OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT, WHICH FAVORS SOLIDARITY AND STABILITY. THE PERPETRATORS OF THE INCIDENT ALSO INFRINGED UPON THE BASIC SPIRIT OF ARTICLE 16 OF THE CONSTITUTION, STIPULATING SEPARATION OF RELIGION FROM POLITICS.

THE PERSONS INVOLVED TOOK ADVANTAGE OF A RELIGIOUS SERVICE IN AN ATTEMPT TO MISLEAD AND AGITATE PEOPLE BY CAUSING THEM TO BELIEVE WRONGFULLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS INTERFERING WITH OR PERSECUTING RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES. THEREFORE THE AUTHORITIES ARE CAREFULLY INVESTIGATING THIS INCIDENT FROM THE STANDPOINT OF MAINTAINING STATUTORY ORDER FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES AND DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY.

THE RECENT ACTIONS BY THE INVESTIGATION AUTHORITIES CONSTITUTE NEITHER INTERFERENCE WITH NOR PERSECUTION OF RELIGION.

THIS CAN BE PROVED CLEARLY BY THE FACT THAT IN THE COURSE OF INVESTIGATION NO ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN AGAINST THOSE WHO DID NOT PARTICIPATE DIRECTLY IN THE ILLEGAL AGITATION FOR OVERTHROW OF THE GOVERNMENT, BUT WHO SIMPLY TOOK PART IN THE RELIGIOUS SERVICE ONLY.

THE GOVERNMENT WISHES TO EMPHASIZE THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO GUARANTEE NORMAL GENUINELY RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM TO THE GREATEST POSSIBLE EXTENT, BASED UPON THE SPIRIT OF THE CONSTITUTION. END TEXT.

2. STATEMENTS BY PROSECUTOR AND MCUI CARRIED STRAIGHT ON BACK PAGES OF NEWSPAPERS AND AS NON-LEAD ITEMS ON RADIO/TV NEWS. THERE HAS BEEN NO EDITORIAL COMMENT AS YET.

3. WASHINGTON POST'S SAAR TOLD PAO THAT HE HAD HAD ONE HOUR INTERVIEW WITH CULTURE INFORMATION MINISTER KIM SONG-CHIN FOLLOWING RELEASE OF STATEMENTS. ACCORDING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SAAR, KIM SAID GOVERNMENT TAKING CASE VERY SERIOUSLY AND INTEND TO MOVE AGAINST PEOPLE INVOLVED IN FORCEFUL BUT LEGAL WAY. SAAR SAID KIM LIKENED PERSONS UNDER INVESTIGATION TO "VIET CONG".

4. INITIAL REACTIONS TO STATEMENTS BY PROSECUTOR AND MCUI VARY. IMMEDIATELY AFTER RELEASE OF STATEMENTS, NEWSWEEK'S SMITH AND WP'S SAAR HAD INTERVIEW WITH

YUN PO-SUN AND GAVE HIM COPIES TO READ. ACCORDING TO THEM, YUN REACTED WITH MILD SHOCK STATING THAT HE HAD EXPECTED REACTION BUT THIS MORE SERIOUS THAN HE ANTICIPATED. FR.CHANG,. SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO CARDINAL KIM, TOLD EMBOFF THAT GOVERNMENT WAS OVERREACTING IN VIRTUALLY ACCUSING PERSONS INVOLVED IN MARCH 1 AFFAIR OF HIGH TREASON. HE SAID GOVERNMENT'S REACTION WAS PREDICTABLE AND HE THOUGHT 11 NAMED AS RINGLEADERS INCLUDING KIM TAE-CHUNG WOULD BE PUNISHED SEVERELY WHILE OTHERS WOULD BE SENTENCED THEN LET OFF. NCCK GENSEC. KIM KWON-SOK ALSO TOLD EMBOFF THAT GOVERNMENT'S REACTION SEVERE BUT NOT UNEXPECTED. HE SAID KCIA SECTION CHEIF, WHO VISITS NCCK OFTEN, TOLD HIM MAJOR FIGURES WOULD GET 15 TO 20 YEARS. HE SAID NCCK NOT PLANNING TO ISSUE ANY KIND OF STATEMENT BUT EXECUTIVE BOARD WOULD MEET MARCH 19 TO TRY TO DECIDE ON COURSE OF ACTION. ROKA MAJOR GENERAL WHO IS FRANK AND RELIABLE CONTACT TOLD POLCOUNS THAT WHILE MANY MILITARY OFFICERS PERSONALLY MIGHT WISH THAT THE SITUATION HAD BEEN HANDLED DIFFERENTLY, THEY FULLY SUPPORT PRESIDENT PARK AND HAVE GENERALLY LOW REGARD FOR KIM TAE-CHUNG, ALTHOUGH HIS SKILL AS SHREWD POLITICIAN IS RECOGNIZED POLITICAL SECTION LOCALS WHO HAVE TESTED REACTIONS OF THEIR CONTACTS WHO HAD LITTLE NEWS OF MARCH 1 EVENT UNTIL MARCH 10 GEVERNMENT STATEMENTS WERE ISSUED, REPORT THAT THEIR FIRST REACTION IS QUIZZICAL, FOR OTHER OSTATEMENTS ARE NOT WIDELY KNOWN. SECOND REACTION IS ONE OF SLIGHT INCREUDILITY THAT GOVERNMENT REGARDS THE GROUP AS A SERIOUS THREAT.

5. WE HAVE CONFIRMED FROM SEVERAL SOURCES THAT KIM TAE-CHUNG AND OTHERS HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED FROM KCIA HEADQUARTERS TO SEOUL'S SODAEMUN PRISON.

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